



Business Communications

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SYLLABUS Spring 2011

READINGS

- Coursepak
- *Woe Is I*, Patricia T. O'Conner. (PTO)
- *Thank You for Arguing*, Jay Heinrichs, (JH)
- *Presentation Zen*, Garr Reynolds, (GR)
- Recommended: *The Gregg Reference Manual*, 11th ed., William A. Sabin

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To provide diagnosis for bad writing habits and prescriptions for a cure
2. To encourage a methodical, strategic-thinking approach in solving communication problems
3. To teach fundamental rhetorical techniques to enable students to develop professional practical, real-world writing and oral communication skills
4. To provide opportunities to develop group communication and leadership skills

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Since an important dimension to this class is using and practicing with the tools you will be taught, I will be calling on each of you randomly to give you the opportunity to think on your feet--or in your seat, as the case may be. In order to participate effectively, you will have to integrate the information presented to you in the lectures, the packet, and the text as we go along. You will not do well in this class if you wait until the midterm to learn this material.

GRADING

Assignments are due by the end of your class or you will lose 5. You will also lose 5 points for each additional day I don't receive it. I will accept an email as proof of meeting the deadline, but you must bring a hard copy to class or to my office as soon as you can.

Here's how your grade will be calculated:

- Five quizzes (10 points each) on the course readings and coursepak material.
- Three letter/memo assignments: the first (10 points), the second (15 points), and the third (75 points).
- Midterm in two parts: an in-class short-answer test (100 points) & a take-home component (100 points)
- Group oral -- a business-plan pitch presentation to potential investors (150 points).
- Extra-credit opportunities
- My evaluation of your effort, class participation, and improvement could possibly bounce your final grade up or down a point

When you know all your scores, add them up and divide by 5 to render a number on a 100-point scale. That number translates into your grade according to the following table:

Grade Scale

98.5	4.0
97	3.9
95.5	3.8
94	3.7
92.5	3.6
91	3.5
89.5	3.4
88	3.3
86.5	3.2
85	3.1
83.5	3.0
82	2.9
80.5	2.8
79	2.7
77.5	2.6
76	2.5
74.5	2.4
73	2.3
71.5	2.2
70	2.1

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

No person shall, on the basis of age, race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin or disability, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of Eastern Washington University.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**1.1 3/30 Course Overview
 Problem Solving
 Rhetorical Technique**

Introduction/Problem Solving

This class will focus on the course objectives and the approach that I take toward teaching practical communications skills appropriate for the workplace. We'll introduce the four problem-solving steps appropriate for any problem solving challenge, adapted here for CMU challenges, and start discussion of Heinrich's book on rhetorical technique. We'll also talk about how to tell a joke.

**1.2 Pronouns, Plurals
 More on Basic Rhetorical Technique
 Situation Analysis**

PTO 1: Woe Is I—Focus more on this chapter.
2: Plurals before Swine—Focus less on this chapter. Know what's in it for future reference

JH 1: Open Your Eyes—What is rhetorical technique? Concession, amplification, and the commonplace
2: Set Your Goals—Do you want to win or win over, fight or argue?

Coursepak: Analysis: pp. 1-7.

This class will take a look at O'Conner's discussion of common problems writers have with pronouns and pluralizing. We will examine Heinrich's distinction between fighting vs. arguing or the goal to win over than simply to win. We'll then work with material in the coursepak to understand better what we mean by Situation Analysis: defining the problem, defining the goals, and defining the audience.

2.1	4/6	Punctuation The Rhetorical Big Three Strategy	Quiz Analysis & Outline due
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PTO 3: Yours Truly—Just browse this chapter.
8. Comma Sutra—Pay more attention to this one.

JH 3: Control the Tense—Forensic, Demonstrative, & Deliberative
4: Soften Them Up—Logos, Pathos, Ethos

Coursepak: Composition and Organization pp. 8-13

After looking at usage issues with regard to possession and punctuation, we'll quickly define what we mean by forensic, demonstrative, and deliberative, rhetorical forms. And we'll lay out the preliminaries regarding Logos, Pathos, and Ethos. We'll start discussing the basic elements that compose Strategy.

2.2	Verbs Ethos More Analysis, Strategy
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PTO 4: They Beg to Disagree, pp. 47-57. (Rest of chapter is optional)
5: Verbal Abuse—Take it slow with this chapter—Use *, ?, ✓ in margins.

JH 5: Get Them to Like You—Ethos and Decorum
6: Make Them Listen: Ethos & Virtue
7: Show Leadership—Ethos & Practical Wisdom
8: Win Their Trust—Ethos & Good Will

Coursepak: Strategy, pp. 8-13

We'll look at some of the trickier issues that plague us all when it comes to verbs. We'll get a little deeper into the weeds regarding what we mean by "Ethos." We'll workshop the analysis and outline, and talk about document format issues.

3.1	4/13	Common Usage Mistakes Pathos Sentences	Quiz 1st assignment final due
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PTO 5: Verbal Abuse--Do a couple of pages every day.
 9: The Compleat Dangler— Writing clearly, sentences require it.

JH 9: Control the Mood—Pathos—Rhetoric & Mood Swings
 10: Turn the Volume Down—When You Want to Keep It Cool

Coursepak: Execution/Evaluation, pp. 14-20.

We'll do a little more on common usage mistakes, and then go deeper into the role of pathos in rhetoric, and then on to the last two of the problem-solving steps—execution and evaluation. If the strategy stage is about the raw meat and the skeleton of your message, Execution is about dressing it up so it can go out in public. We'll focus on effective paragraphs and formats, vigorous sentence style, and working quickly and efficiently.

3.2	Wrapping up Sentences, The Commonplace & Reframing Effective Revision Techniques	2nd Assignment distributed
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PTO : 10: Saying Is Believing: It's all about effective sentences.

JH 11: Gain the High Ground: Ethos & the Commonplace
 12: Persuade on Your Terms: Reframing & Redefining Terms

Coursepak: Execution Evaluation, pp. 20-23.
 Memos, Letters, Emails, pp. 24-30.

We'll look at O'Conner's Fifteen Rules to "say what you mean." And we'll look at the last of the Content, Clarity, Correctness steps in the execution revision process. This last stage is about straightening the tie, polishing the shoes, and making sure everything is perfect.

4.1 **4/19** **Logos** **Quiz**
 Direct Requests & Bad News **2nd Assignment Final Due**

JH 13: Control the Argument—Intro to Logos
 (14: Spot Fallacies—Optional: browse)
 15: Call Foul—Don't argue the inarguable

Coursepak: Direct Requests & Bad News, pp. 31-37.

We'll start looking at how "logos" plays a role in argumentation, and learn how to say "No".

4.2 **Using Ethos Effectively** **3rd Assignment distributed**
 Persuasion, Sales

JH (16: Know Whom to Trust & 17: Find the Sweet Spot –Just browse)
 18: Speak your Audience's Language—Ethos and Code Grooming
 19: Make Them Identify with Your Choice—Ethos & Identity

Coursepak: Request Messages, Sales Letters—pp. 38-40.

We shift in this class from informational to request messages. We'll spend a little time talking about the direct request and move to Sales letters and the problem/solution strategy.

5.1	4/26	Rhetorical Impact Persuasive Requests Business Plans	Quiz 3rd assignment due
JH	20: Get Instant Cleverness 21: Seize the Occasion 22: Use the Right Medium		
Coursepak: Persuasive Requests, pp. 41-46; Business Plans, 47.			
In this class we build upon what we learned from junk mail letter strategy to a broader category of persuasive messages in which your goal is to motivate a resistant audience to action. We'll extend this discussion to a consideration of the Business Plan group project. Your job will be to persuade investors to give you the capital you'll need to begin a new business.			
5.2		Cicero's Big 5, Intro to GR, More Business Plans/Work Plans	
JH:	23: Give a Persuasive Talk		
GR	1: Presenting in Today's World		
Coursepak: More Business Plans, pp. 48-52.			
We'll go into more detail about the strategies and objectives of a business plan. We'll talk about various investor types and how you have to shape your presentation to meet the investment objectives of each. We'll watch and critique the oral presentation of a group presentation from a previous class.			
6.1	5/3	Oral Presentations: Developing Content Sticky Ideas Leadership & Groups	Quiz Persuasive Talk distributed
GR	2: Creativity, Limitations, and Constraints		
Coursepak: Oral Presentations Group Work and Developing Memorable Content, pp. 53-57.			
We'll talk more about getting organized for the business plan presentation and about how the work plan can help you in that. We'll also introduce the Press Kits project today. I'll give an overview and talk in some detail about how to write a Press Release.			
6.2		More on Sticky Ideas and Content	Work plan due
GR	3: Planning Analog 4: Crafting the Story		

7.1	5/10	Oral Presentations: VAs & Charts	Persuasive Talk due
<p>GR 5: Simplicity—Why It Matters 6: Presentation Design—Principles and Techniques 7: Sample Slides—Images & Text</p>			
<p>Coursepak: Preparing Visual Aids, pp. 58-60.</p>			
<p>We'll talk in this class about the question and answer strategy for developing content for an oral presentation. We'll also be talking about the use PowerPoint and other visual aid possibilities. There are so many ways to go wrong here. You need to learn what they are and avoid them.</p>			
7.2	Oral Presentations: Delivery		
<p>GR 8: The Art of Being Completely Present</p>			
<p>Coursepak: Delivery, p. 61.</p>			
<p>This class will focus on delivery skills and rehearsal strategies. We'll watch a video of a student group and critique the delivery of its presentation, and then outline what goals you should be setting for yourself to achieve as a group when you get in front of the class.</p>			
8.1	5/17	Mid-Term More on Visual Aids	
<p>One-hour midterm covering coursepak concepts and skills and the Garr Reynolds readings</p>			
8.2	Content Rehearsals		
9	5/24	Oral Reports –Group 1, 2, & 3	
<p>It's all you now. This will be your opportunity to show me that you've learned what persuasion really means so that by the end of your presentation I'll be salivating to invest with your new startup.</p>			

10 5/31 Oral Reports—Groups 4, 5, & 6

In the last class we'll do peer and course evaluations. I'll also be returning your graded Option 1/2 assignments and the evaluations and grades for those groups who have made their presentations in the days preceding.